AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (original) A drying method for drying a coating layer which is formed by coating a moving web with a coating solution containing organic solvent, comprising steps of:

transporting almost vertically and upward said web immediately after the coating;

inclining with one or larger number of guide rollers the upward transporting of said web from an almost vertical direction toward a horizontal direction gradually; and

drying said coating layer with a drying device having a casing which surrounds said web just after the coating while disturbance of wind close to a coating surface is prevented, and concentration of said solvent vapor in a side of a surface of said coating layer is kept high.

2. (original) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein said one or plural guide rollers are disposed within said drying device.

3. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein said transporting direction is directed upwardly with 60°-90° inclination to a horizontal direction, and said coating surface is positioned upside.

4. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein velocity of said wind inside said drying device is less than 0.1 m/s in a situation in which the transport of said web is stopped.

5. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein said coating layer is dried by a heat-drying means disposed downstream from said drying device.

6. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein an interval between a coating position and said first guide roller disposed closest to said coating position within said drying device relative said transporting direction of said web is less than 2m.

7. (original) A drying method claimed in claim 6, wherein other guide rollers disposed downstream from said first guide roller are disposed with at most 2m interval.

8. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein said drying device is disposed within 0.7m after the coating.

9. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein a device for condensing and recovering said organic solvent in said coating solution on said coating surface at said transporting position of said web within said drying device.

10. (original) A drying method claimed in claim 9, wherein a plate-like member is used for said device for condensing and recovering.

11. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 9, wherein each said device is disposed in a space formed by partitioning an inside of said drying device with said guide rollers.

12. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 10, wherein said plate-like member is provided for a cooling apparatus, and temperature of said plate member is adjustable with use of said cooling apparatus.

13. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 10, wherein a flow path in which said condensed organic solvent flows in effect of gravity is provided on a surface of said plate-like member.

14. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein side plates are disposed on both sides of said drying device, or said sides are tightly closed so as to prevent said solvent vapor from said coating layer from flowing out of said both sides of said drying device.

15. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein a content of said organic solvent in said coating solution is at least 50% by mass.

16. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein said drying device dries at least 70% by mass of said organic solvent contained in said coating solution.

17. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein there is a heating device in a side of a non-coating surface of a transport position of said web within said drier.

18. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein a thickness of said wet coating layer is at most 50 μm.

19. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein an extrusion die coater is used to apply said coating solution on said web supported by a back-up member.

20. (previously presented) A drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein at least a wire bar coater or a graver coater is used to apply said coating solution on said web.

21-41. (canceled)